Modernisation and expansion plan for Patna airport

3185. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether AAI has prepared any modernisation and expansion plan for Patna airport in Bihar;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to convert it into an international airport to attract Buddhist and Sikh pilgrims from aborad; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (d) AAI has plans to construct Terminal Building and Technical Block at Patna Airport at an estimated cost of Rs. 608 lakhs. The Terminal Building has been inaugurated on 21.12.96. This airport can cater to limited international traffic. However, there is no proposal to convert it into an international airport.

Mystery about the Victims of Mid-air collision at Charkhi Dadri

3186. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many persons listed as dead in the mid-air collision at Charkhi Dadri in November 1996 are alive;

(b) whether it is also a fact that more than 38 passengers were travelling on fake documents; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to check this scamy racket of forged passports and unscrupulous travel agents?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to prevent use of forged travel documents include introduction of 'More Secured Passports' with several security features viz (i) incorporation of invisible letters, numers and designs which can be read only under ultra violet lamp, (ii) micro-printing in lines, (iii) water mark in every page, (iv) perforated passport number on every page; and (v) special training to Immigration Officers for detecting cases of impersonation.

Issue of entry passes by Airport Authority

3187. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Airport Authority of India is giving entry passes for the Airports to the general public; and

(b) if so, what are the criteria therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) No, Sir.
(b) Does not arise.

Airports closed for flights

3188. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether some airports of country have been closed for flights during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State and Union Territory-wise;

(c) whether Government propose to open some of such airports at least for domestic flights; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The following airports were not in operation during the last 3 years:— Ballurghat and Malda (West Bengal), Bilaspur, Khandwa, Panna and Satna (Madhya Pradesh), Chakulia, Jogbani, Muzzafarpur and Raxaul (Bihar), Cuddapah, Donakonda and Warangal (Andhra Pradesh), Mysore and Hassan (Karnataka), Deesa (Gujarat), Jhansi and Lalitpur (Uttar Pradesh), Jharsuguda (Orissa), Kailashahar, Kamalaput and Khowai

(Tripura), Passighat (Arunachal Pradesh), Rupsi and Shella (Assam), Sholapur (Maharashtra), and Vellore (Tamil Nadu).

(c) and (d) Airports are closed because none of the airlines are operating any flights to those locations. It is entirely for the airlines to decide whether they would operate their flights to any particular airport. Airports Authority will provide the necessary facilities for safe operation to such airports. During the last 3 years, four airports at Akola, Hubli, Kota and Gaya have been made operational.

Status of Jet Airways and Tata-Singapore Airlines

3189. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government did not allow the Tata-Singapore Airlines to operate in our domestic routes; and

(b) what is the status of Jet Airways via-a-vis Tata-Singapore Airlines with regards to foreign equity share?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) In accordance with the policy on domestic air transport service sector:

1. Foreign equity upto 40% and NRI/ OCB investment upto 100% would be permitted in the domestic air transport services.

2. Equity from foreign airlines will not be allowed directly or indirectly, in the domestic air transport services.

3. The existing companies operating in the domestic air transport sector in which equity is held by foreign airlines, directly or indirectly, will be advised to disinvest equity held by foreign airlines within a period of six months.

Since the proposal of M/s Tata Industries involved direct foreign equity participation of 40% by M/s Singapore Airlines, the proposal for grant of NOC to operate scheduled air transport services could not be considered.

Consequent to the approval of new policy, M/s Jet Airways, a scheduled domestic private airline has also been advised to take immediate measures for disinvestment of 40% equity held by foreign airlines (20% each by M/s Gulf Air and M/s Kuwait Airways) within six months.

Passenger carriage growth of IA

3190. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the growth in passenger carriage in 1996-97, registered by Indian Airlines;

(b) similar growth figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(c) what steps have been taken to increase passenger carriage growth of IA; and

(d) the decline in vacant passenger capacity carried by IA over the years since 1994-95?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) The growth in passenger carriage registered by Indian airlines and Alliance Air during the years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 were—3.2%, 1.3% and 5.4% respectively.

(c) Indian Airlines has taken various steps in areas like product improvement, commercial initiatives and passenger facilitation to increase its passenger carriage growth.

(d) The details of the seat factor of